Student Records Audit

Audit Report # 13-30
May 29, 2014

Office of Auditing and Consulting Services

"Committed to Service, Independence and Quality"
May 29, 2014

Dr. Diana Natalicio
President, University of Texas at El Paso
Administration Building, Suite 500
El Paso, Texas 79968

Dear Dr. Natalicio:

The Office of Auditing and Consulting Services has completed a limited-scope audit of the Registration and Records Office for FY 12-13. The objectives of this audit were to determine the effectiveness of administrative controls over grade changes, whether grade changes are processed in accordance with University policy and to assess the integrity and availability of student records.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by the Registration and Records Office management team during our audit.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
William A. Peters, CPA, CIA
Director
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University of Texas at El Paso

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Auditing and Consulting Services has completed a limited-scope audit of the Office of Registration and Records (ORR). Our audit objective was to review compliance with applicable laws, regulations and University policies regarding the administration of student grades, safeguarding of student records, and authorized access to student records in Banner.

During the audit we noted the following:

- 482 grade changes were processed after the one year deadline imposed by the Handbook of Operating Procedures.
- The data entered into the ORR database is not consistently recorded, and we found multiple data entry errors.

We conclude that the ORR is not in compliance with the University’s grade change policy. Grade changes should be processed in accordance with the Handbook of Operating Procedures, which states “all student-initiated grade reviews and grade appeals shall be made no later than one year after the official grade has been released to the student.”

We believe that by implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, the department will strengthen the safeguarding and integrity of student records.
BACKGROUND

The Office of Registration and Records provides administrative support to the University and is responsible for publishing each term’s Class Schedule, processing students’ registrations, course schedule adjustments, name and number changes and verifying degrees and enrollments.

Additional tasks include processing transcript requests, graduation applications and diplomas, maintenance of directory information and student records and distribution of grades. During fiscal years 2012 and 2013 over 22,000 changes to student records were processed. These changes included grade changes, transcript uploads and Option 2 changes. Option 2 changes allow students returning to the University after an absence of two years or more to remove previous course work from the calculation of their GPA.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this audit were to determine whether:

A. administrative controls over grade changes are effective,

B. appropriate access controls are in place to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of students records, and

C. grade changes are processed in accordance with University policy.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This was a limited scope audit of the student records management and student grade administration at The University of Texas at El Paso. Our audit procedures included performing tests to verify the effectiveness of internal controls, interviewing personnel and reviewing documents to verify compliance with laws, regulations and policies and procedures over student records administration. The audit period included grade change activity during fiscal years 2012 and 2013.

The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing issued by the Institute of Internal Auditors.
AUDIT RESULTS

A. Administrative Controls

Grade Changes Processed Past One Year
The Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOOP) states “all student-initiated grade reviews and grade appeals shall be made no later than one year after the official grade has been released to the student.” In fiscal year 2013, the Office of Records and Registration (ORR) processed 482 grade changes past the one year limit. Of the 482, 96 (20%) grade changes processed were for courses taken prior to 2008. Although this is a significant improvement from fiscal 2012, it still is not in compliance with HOOP.

Recommendation: Grade changes should be processed in accordance with the Handbook of Operating Procedures and a control or review mechanism should be developed to identify root causes of systemic late grade changes to further reduce unauthorized activity.

Management’s Response: A catalog change request, through the Academic Policies Committee, was submitted to update the language with the current practice of changing grades after one academic year. The following language change, reflected in italicized text below, was made to mirror the current practice.

Grade Changes
“Students must submit to the faculty of record a written request for a grade change as soon as possible after the receipt of the grade but not later than one year after the semester in which the course in question was taken. A graduating student must request a grade change within three months after the last day of final examinations of the last semester enrolled. After this time, all grades become part of the student’s official academic history and cannot be altered. Grade changes submitted after this timeframe must be approved by the academic dean.”

Responsible Parties: Interim Registrar and Senior Director of Enrollment Services

Implementation Date: December 1, 2014

B. Access Controls
Controls are in place to limit access to initiate grade changes in the student information system (Banner). Users having grade change access must be authorized by ORR. A review of the
current users in Banner having grade change access indicated all had the appropriate authorizations.

C. Consistency in Database Entries
The ORR maintains a database which tracks all grade change forms submitted. This database contains the grade change form number (SERNO), the student identification number, course reference number, term code and date received. The database information is not consistently recorded, and we found multiple data entry errors such as duplicate entries, lack of consistency in the records entered and improper formatting. As a result, we were unable to test for missing SERNOs and duplicate records.

**Recommendation:** The department should develop a policy which details the information to be gathered, recorded and maintained in the ORR database. This policy should include the following:

- a definition of which records should be entered into the database,
- required fields for each entry, and
- format of the information entered.

**Management’s Response:** The number staff members given access to input data into the database has been limited to four: two highly trained student staff members and two professional staff members. Guidance and manuals have also been provided to these staff members to instruct them in consistent information collection and documentation. Currently, the Office Records and Registration is testing the use of an electronic grade change form: a form that will the Office Records and Registration to track the entire grade change process from initial request to its final change in the student information system.

**Responsible Parties:** Interim Registrar and Associate Registrar

**Implementation Date:** July 1, 2015

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of audit procedures performed, we conclude that the ORR is not in compliance with the University grade change policy. However, we believe that by implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, the department will strengthen the safeguarding and integrity of student records.

We wish to thank the management and staff of the ORR for their assistance and cooperation provided throughout the audit.